

# DFID Policy on Standards of Accessibility for Disabled People in DFID Financed Education Construction

## 1. Introduction

Ministers have recently announced that all new school construction that we **directly** support **must** follow principles of universal design to ensure access to children with disabilities.

This guidance provides standards for any new or renovation construction education projects funded directly by DFID to allow access by people with disabilities. It promotes use of the fully comprehensive AusAID guidelines on Universal Design. It includes a provision for a waiver of the application of standards in certain circumstances.

Access to education is identified globally as an inalienable human right. However, despite this, many children remain unable to access this right. It is estimated that nearly one third of out of school children have disabilities<sup>i</sup>. Universal Design is widely recommended as a key access strategy for children with disabilities in meeting Education for All and the Millennium Development Goals<sup>ii</sup>.

Under the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), accessibility is one of the eight general principles (Article 3). The UK, and the Governments of most of the countries that DFID works in, have ratified the UNCRPD. In addition to the UK's own obligation under Article 32 to make our overseas aid programmes inclusive of people with disabilities, national governments who have ratified the convention have agreed to make education facilities accessible under Article 24.

Universal Design is **cost-effective**. Research has demonstrated that the cost of accessibility is generally less than 1% of total construction costs; however, the cost of making adaptations after a building is completed is far greater<sup>iii</sup>. A growing body of evidence is also showing that inclusive schools are more cost-effective, and academically and socially effective, than special schools<sup>iv</sup>.

## 2. Policy

- A. **Universal Design** – This guidance promotes universal design over accessible design. Accessible design means products and buildings that are accessible and usable by people with disabilities. Universal design means products and buildings that are accessible and usable by everyone, including people with disabilities. DFID believes that accessible design has a tendency to lead to separate facilities for people with disabilities, diminishing the effectiveness of its efforts. Universal design, on the other hand, provides one solution that can accommodate people with disabilities as well as the rest of the population. For further practical information please make reference to AusAID's guidelines on universal design (under 'Resources' below).
- B. **Formalised Commitments** – This guidance is applicable to all new DFID financed education construction activities, including contracts, Accountable Grants framework arrangements, MoUs and other formalised commitments where DFID solely and directly funds school construction. In cases where we are jointly funding school construction with several other partners, for example through a pooled fund, we will encourage partners to adhere to this guidance however will not specify its application.
- C. **Accessibility Standards** – In order to stimulate sustainable, developmentally sound attention to the needs of people with disabilities in host countries, the first preference is to use host country or regional standards for universal access in construction if they exist. Where they do not exist, the contractors should discuss usage of alternative standards with the partner government and DFID, such as those outlined in the United States ADA and Architectural Barriers Act (ABA) Accessibility Guidelines or AusAID's Accessibility Design Guide.
- D. **Applying the Standards** –

- (1) **New construction** – All new education construction activities that are directly and solely financed by DFID will incorporate universal design principles in accordance with the standards/principles stated above.
  - (2) **Alterations** – Changes to an existing education structure which is directly financed by DFID that affects, or could affect the usability of the structure shall adhere to the standards, unless these alterations are technically infeasible and/or constitute an undue burden to the grantee or contractor. As a general rule, the principle of "if touched, it should be accessible" shall apply.
  - (3) **Exceptions** –
    - a. Normal maintenance, re-roofing, painting or wallpapering, or changes to mechanical or electrical systems are not alterations and, therefore, the standards do not apply unless they affect the accessibility of the building or facility.
    - b. Emergency construction that is temporary in nature (though the needs of people with disabilities should be included in the overall program). Buildings constructed of concrete, brick or other sustainable material should not be considered temporary. When the emergency situation normalizes, however, more permanent structures will follow the guidance on standards in this document.
    - c. Technical infeasibility – With respect to an alteration of a building or a facility, this constitutes something that has little likelihood of being accomplished because existing structural conditions would require removing or altering a load-bearing member that is an essential part of the structural frame; or because other existing physical or site constraints prohibit modification or addition of elements, spaces, or features that are in full and strict compliance with the minimum requirements.
    - d. Undue burden – This would entail significant difficulty or expense. In determining whether an action would result in an undue burden, an agency/organization shall consider all resources available to the program or component for which the product is being developed, procured, maintained, or used.
- E. **Waiver** – When it can be demonstrated that adherence to these standards is not possible, DFID may authorize a waiver to these guidelines.

Waiver requests can be approved by the lead project or programme staff managing the programme.

The following guidance should be applied to waiver requests:

- (1) The request for a waiver must identify the specific requirements and procedures of these guidelines from which a waiver is sought and provide a detailed explanation, including appropriate information or documentation, as to why a waiver should be granted. A statement(s) that, where feasible, persons with disabilities will be accommodated and how such accommodations will allow access to all programs and services needed, should accompany requests.
- (2) Grounds for a waiver include, but are not limited to:
  - a. Lack of technical feasibility
  - b. Undue burden
  - c. Restricted or limited use

- (3) Waivers should generally not be applied to a project or program but should be granted on a case-by-case basis with reference to elements of a specific structure or a set of similar structures.

## Resources

[AusAID \(2013\) Accessibility Design Guide](#): Universal design principles for Australia's aid program. A companion volume to Development for All: Towards a disability inclusive Australian aid program 2009–2014: (Annex F focuses on Education)

Centre for Excellence in Universal Design. [7 Principles](#).

David, V. 2008 [How to build an accessible environment in developing countries: Manual 2](#) - Access to water and sanitation facilities, Part 1 – Toilets and closed showers. Handicap International.

[How to build an accessible environment in developing countries: Manual 3](#) – Free movement. Handicap International.

Water and sanitation for disabled people and other vulnerable groups: Designing services to improve accessibility. [Chapter 7: Toilets access and use](#). WEDC Loughborough, UK.

[Inclusive design of school latrines](#) – how much does it cost and who benefits? WEDC.

Sophal, K. & Fox, S. (2006) "Physical Accessibility & Education," in EENET [Asia Newsletter No. 4](#), Jakarta, Indonesia: EENET Asia, pp. 14-15

Steinfeld, E. (2005) [Education for All: the Cost of Accessibility](#). World Bank.

---

<sup>i</sup> J. Balescut and K Eklindh (2006) "Historical Perspectives on Education for Persons with Disabilities, quoted in the UNESCO Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2007. Guernsey, K., Nicoli, M. & Ninio, A (2006) Making Inclusion Operational: Legal and Institutional Resources for the World Bank Staff on the Inclusion of Disability Issues in Investment Projects. World Bank.

<sup>ii</sup> WHO and World Bank (2011) World Report on Disability. UNICEF (2013) The State of the World's Children: Children with Disabilities. Steinfield, E. (2005) Education for All: The Cost of Accessibility. World Bank. UNESCO (2009) Education for All. Global Monitoring Report. Paris.

<sup>iii</sup> Steinfield, E. (2005) Education for All: The Cost of Accessibility. World Bank

<sup>iv</sup> The cost of segregated places can be 7 to 9 times higher than placement for children in a general education classroom. OECD (1994) The Integration of Disabled Children into Mainstream Education: Ambitions, Theories and Practices. Paris. OECD (2000) Special Needs Education Statistics and Indicators. Paris. UNICEF (2012) The Right of Children with Disabilities to Education: A Rights Based Approach to Inclusive Education. Position Paper. OECD (1999) Inclusive Education at Work: Students with Disabilities in Mainstream Education. Paris.